

Current Issue



[SUBSCRIBE HERE](#)

Cities benefit from commuting options

Apr 1, 2005 12:00 PM
Patrice Thornton

Local leaders promote alternative transportation.

If urban areas keep growing at the current rate, by 2012 medium-sized metropolitan areas will have the same traffic volume that large metropolitan areas have today, according to the American Census Bureau's 2003 American Community Survey. To reverse that trend, more than 50 cities and counties in 11 states including Richardson, Texas; Redmond, Wash.; and Aspen, Colo. have begun offering commuter benefits as part of the Washington-based U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) "Best Workplaces for Commuters" program.

Richardson provides its employees with discounted monthly transit passes and subsidized van pool services. In 2003, Richardson officials say city employees who did not drive alone to work saved more than 27,000 gallons of gasoline and reduced pollution emissions by 240 tons. The city also maintains an emergency ride home program, providing taxi fare for employees who need to get home quickly in cases of emergency.

At first, the programs were a response to a federal government mandate requiring the city to reduce air pollution. As local businesses also joined the EPA's program and began offering similar benefits, Richardson leaders soon realized other benefits, including reduced traffic, pollution and vehicle crashes. City representatives meet frequently with local businesses to teach them about commuter programs. "Local governments cannot expect area businesses to implement sound commuter benefits programs if they do not do so themselves," says Kim Farwell, the city's transportation analyst.

Redmond also offers commuter benefits to its employees and helps local employers implement commuter programs. Eighteen years ago, the city established a trip reduction mandate to lessen the negative effects of a growing population. To ensure that employers offer benefits, such as transit pass subsidies and telecommuting support, roughly 100 city staff hours a year are used to collect and evaluate businesses' reports of trip reduction efforts.

The mandate has reduced the number of drive-alone trips generated by large businesses by more than 10 percent, substantially lowering emissions, saving fuel and unclogging congested roadways. Most of Redmond's funds for transportation management programs come from a \$55 per employee tax on businesses.

Aspen goes beyond helping its own employees get to work by providing commuting options for the city's 300 employers and more than 12,000 employees. Residents and visitors can use free citywide bus service that carries more than 1 million passengers annually. Residents also have access to a car-sharing program, in which members can rent cars by the hour. The shared cars are parked throughout the city.

To supplement the free public transit and car-sharing programs, the city has an emergency ride home program for its employees, as well as lockers and showers for walkers and cyclists. Aspen even provides a fleet of 12 bicycles its employees can use to run errands. Despite a growing population, Aspen's traffic volume has not increased since

[EMAIL THIS ARTICLE](#)



Weekly Snapshot Winner

CLICK HERE for the

**NEW
RER REPORTS**

THE WEEKLY ELECTRONIC NEWS SERVICE FOR THE RENTAL EQUIPMENT INDUSTRY


- [Home](#)
- [Subscribe to Newsletter](#)
- [This week's e-mail newsletter](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Awards Entry Forms](#)
- [Government Career Opportunities](#)
- [Events](#)
- [MCI Archive](#)
- [Product Info](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

- [Advertiser Info](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Rent Mail Lists](#)
- [Digital Ads](#)



1993 because of its commuter benefits program, according to the city.

Patrice Thornton is a team manager for the Washington-based U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

[Want to use this article? Click here for options!](#) 
© 2005, PRIMEDIA Business Magazines & Media Inc.

[Back to Top](#)

Key:  Paid Content  Enhanced for the Web

[Contact Us](#) [For Advertisers](#) [For Search Partners](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Subscribe](#)

© 2005 Primedia, Inc. All rights reserved.